



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES

HOLY ISLAND.

By SARAH WILSON.

WE have a singular geographical feature on our north-east coast, between Bamborough and Berwick-upon-Tweed, that has been called from time immemorial a semi-island.

When the tide of the great North Sea, or German Ocean, is high it is a complete island; and when it is low it becomes part of the mainland, or connected with it by nearly three miles of wet, flat sands, which are sometimes smooth and sometimes wrinkled, for the most part firm to the tread, but in some places sloshy and 'quick.' This has been noticed and described by Bede, and by Scott in *Marmion*. In common parlance it is always called 'the island' by the residents, though the necessary traffic between it and the mainland is carried on as much by conveyance as by boat. Those who have no vehicles nor horses take off their shoes and stockings at low-tide and walk over the long stretch of intervening sands. The removal of these articles of apparel is not necessary till the foot-passengers are confronted by the first of a few small streams left by the tide, or by the rivulet known as 'the Low,' in which the water remains at a stationary depth of several inches. At long intervals of time there are casualties. The tide comes in with great force and speed, and sometimes people are overtaken by it and carried away. Benighted foot-passengers have lost their way and been drowned, and conveyances have been occasionally overwhelmed by the racing-in waters and swept away. For many years there has been a line of tall wooden guide-posts passing from the mainland to the island to show where the route is free from quicksands, but nevertheless, as stated, accidents still occur, though happily but rarely. Not long since a solitary and venturesome artist returning from the island was intercepted by the rapidly incoming tide, and only saved his life by climbing to the sort of cage fixed to the top of one of these posts, and remaining on it till the waters receded again. Two residents, too, returning to the island

in the deepening dusk in a conveyance, became uncertain, owing to a sharp swerve of their horse, as to which was the right direction to take, and only saved themselves from disaster by climbing one of the poles and feeling for the indicator on the top. Still more recently a traveller crossing in a gig was swept out of it and drowned. And the parish register tells of many losses in former times.

This geographical curiosity is Holy Island, formerly known as Lindisfarne, but thus designated 'anew in later times on account of the sanctity of the lives of the missionaries who took up their abode on it in the days of the Saxon kings. With rough-and-ready reckoning it may be said to contain about a thousand acres, and to be about three miles long and half that extent in width. To the visitor from the mainland there are various items of interest on this small area—the village, the castle, the church, the majestic ruins of the priory and priory church, the vicarage, the Heugh, which is a long, sloping basaltic rock, forty feet high, that the fishermen use as a lookout; the cliffs, the coves, the harbour, a lakelet, the flora, birds, seals, and the ancient traditions, to say nothing of the hardy, hearty population of somewhere about six hundred souls, and the various modern efforts at progress, which include a schoolhouse, a chapel, a manor-house, and a telephone connected with the telegraph on the mainland. Curiously, there is also an island on the island, or, rather, about a hundred yards from the verge of its shore facing the mainland. This consists of about half an acre of basalt rock that rises considerably higher than the rest of the beach, on which may still be traced the foundations of a small chapel. This was St. Outhbert's Chapel. Tradition has it that the austere recluse often retired from the life in the community to this little island for long periods of isolation, when his comrades made their way to it over the rocks at low-water to convey food to him.

The history of the island begins in the days of the Heptarchy, when Oswald, king of Northumbria,

No. 20.—VOL. I.

[All Rights Reserved.]

APRIL 16, 1898.

then residing at Bamborough, invited the Christian community in Scotland to send a missionary to instruct his subjects. The first delegate, who was sent from the island of Iona, after a year's trial returned with the conviction that the Northumbrians were too ignorant, and their minds too unresponsive to be instructed; but a second one, Aidan, less faint-hearted, established himself permanently on the island of Lindisfarne, which probably recommended itself to him on account of its correspondence with the insular situation of the abode of the community that he had left. For sixteen years he carried out the work thus undertaken, with the assistance of twelve followers, erecting churches (then built of wood), baptising in one week, as is reported, as many as fifteen thousand people, and travelling about preaching the gospel in remote places; and then he died, almost in harness. His successor, Finan, equally ardent and devout, baptised two royal converts, the kings of Mercia and East Anglia.

The three succeeding bishops also further increased the usefulness and renown of the settlement; but it is to the sixth bishop, Cuthbert, or to his biographers, that most of the romance of the island is due. His long, solitary seclusions, the austerities he practised, the disdain and dislike of women imputed to him, all enlarged upon by his biographers and embroidered with their pious fancies, and followed up by the singular appearance of exemption from decay presented by his remains when examined centuries after his death, created a personality that takes rank below but few of our celebrities. After a succession of sixteen of these Saxon bishops, an incursion of the Danes caused the brotherhood to gather their valuables together and depart for the mainland, when the island became uninhabited once more.

Nearly two hundred years afterwards, when St Cuthbert's remains were enshrined in the magnificent cathedral on the high bank of the Wear at Durham, it came into the heart of those in authority there to take possession of the deserted site once more, and eventually to raise upon it the superb fabric of which there are such considerable remains. Besides providing the necessary accommodation for the community of monks they established, one Ædward laid out the dimensions of the priory church on an extensive scale: a hundred feet of length for the nave and thirty-five more for the chancel, with wide transepts and a great central tower. Those under him reared vast cylindrical columns to aisles that widened the building to forty-four feet, and some of these were incised with chevrons, and some enriched with semi-detached columns, similar to examples in Durham Cathedral, and crowned with cushioned capitals. They made inviting doorways with receding columns, and pierced the massive walls with many windows, all showing the unmistakable features that give the distinguishing touches to Norman architecture. And in this majestic build-

ing services were performed for nearly five hundred years. Then came the dissolution of monasteries, and it was used as a storehouse; and after that many of the stones were taken away for various purposes. In 1723 the old bell-tower of the parish church and the battlements were repaired with stones taken from the priory church. Nevertheless there is sufficient of the august masonry remaining to impart an indescribable charm.

There is an open space in the village with a cross in it, telling of the time when a market, now discontinued, was periodically held there. There is also an old house, known as the Bishop's House, in which there is an Elizabethan panelled chamber. For the rest, there are four inns, a new two-storied hotel, the fishermen's cottages, a few larger houses, a farm or two, and a rocket and lifeboat house. Around on all sides is the sea, glittering like diamonds, and gently lapping or rolling in with dull, angry waves according to the weather, ever coming or going. Boats bask in the sunshine or bear the burden of the rains and winds on the shore, or rise and fall upon the waters; and black and white ships pass by, in the distance, in silence. From certain points as you walk about the island you can see the great castle on the steep rock at Bamborough across the intervening sea, or sands, as the case may be, as well as the twenty-eight Farne Islands, with their two lighthouses, one of which, the Longstone, has the special interest of having been the home of Grace Darling. Everywhere close at hand you see the steep-sloping Hengh, with sun-bronzed seafaring men on it with telescopes, ever on the lookout; the island castle, with its three cannons on its batteries; the village houses, with their fluted-tiled and slated roofs; and the priory ruins, with their majestic arches high in the air.

The pale-gray old parish church is only fifty-two feet west of the priory ruins. In the churchyard are many sea-bleached tombstones, mostly standing up out of the arrowy grasses, inscriptions on which tell of frequent deaths at sea, and many of which have the sacred monogram I.H.S. upon them, understood locally to mean, 'I have suffered.' By contrast with the richness of the ornamentation on the priory ruins, the church looks plain at a first glance, but a closer examination reveals features and facts of much interest. We may see that it was a small Norman building to begin with, to which an arcade of Transitional columns, still strong, was added on the north side a few years afterwards, with chamfered arches built with red and white stones alternately. In the next century, known architecturally as the Early English period, a new chancel, nearly fifty feet long, was built; and in the succeeding one the south side of the original church was taken down and a south aisle thrown out. The walls are thick and strong, and pierced with splayed windows of these different centuries of workmanship. There are some minor features, such as two porches, a priest's door in the chancel, a piscina marking the site of

a chantry in old times, and three ambries. There are also a few ancient grave-slabs marking the last resting-places of persons of distinction. A few years ago there were several small models of various sea-going crafts in different parts of the church, which had been placed there by the fishermen as decorations. These have now been removed, but there remains a general aspect of devotional simplicity and severity. Below the wooden top of the communion-table are the original stone supports of the ancient altar. The register begins in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the communion-plate bears the date 1575. So—just as we take it for granted there is only grass under foot as we approach the edifice, till we notice sea-lavender here, tufts of thrift there, the hemlock-leaved crane's-bill farther on, the sea-side thistle and soft-knotted clover, and many another of Nature's floral profusions near at hand—we find, when we come to look, that there are many fragments of the times between the days of Ædward and ourselves embalmed in it.

The castle, now occupied by coastguardsmen, has its own romance. In the Border Survey made by Sir Robert Bowes in 1550, it is described as likely to be of 'great purpose,' both for defence and for the annoyance of enemies should such arrive on any part of the island. A hundred and sixty-five years afterwards an enemy did arrive in the persons of two brothers named Errington, who, when five out of the seven men composing the garrison were absent, took possession of it in the name of the Pretender. The possession only lasted for a short time, but the possibility so carefully considered long beforehand came to pass. Sir William Brereton, writing a diary of his travels in 1635, calls the castle 'a dainty little fort,' and mentions that the governor, Captain Rugg, was as famous for his generous entertainment of strangers as he was for his great bottle-nose, which was the largest the traveller had ever seen. There are traces of another small fortress on the eastern end of the Hengh that was probably intended to assist in the protection of the harbour.

From the evidence of its stones we can tell it mounted two guns. The parish register records the burial of thirty soldiers in the churchyard in 1639—'About this tyme were sundrie sogers buried,' it states simply.

Then there are the coves. These are far-reaching recesses or caves, hollowed out into the cliffs on the north side of the island. They are dark, steep cliffs, full of fossilised encrinites, and rise to a height of about forty feet. The fragments known as St Cuthbert's beads are found in abundance here. Those who have an eye for such things will note boulders and pebbles of granite, porphyry, syenite, graywacke, basalt, and other stones from distant sources strewn on the beach. The waters under these cliffs are so clear that pebbles have been seen at the bottom through a depth of many feet. There is a sandbank, too, called the Seal-bat, where seals are frequently seen and young ones occasionally captured. Nearer to the Castle Point shoals of porpoises are often noticed, especially in the herring season. As we wander over the sandy flats and links sea-birds fly overhead; sometimes a flock of brent geese. Underfoot grow the elk's-horn cup-lichen, the grass of Parnassus, the water-pimpernel, the blue fleabane, the catch-fly, the wild larkspur, spoonwort, marsh-arrow grass, and the dwarf tufted centaur, among other plants. Wall-flower, said to be indigenous to the island, is conspicuous at the priory.

Macready tells us in his *Memoirs* that he resided on the island for a time in his young days, and that in the remoteness and quietude of his surroundings he almost forgot his native tongue. As the curtain descended upon his histrionic triumphs, amidst the deafening applause of enraptured town-bred audiences, the remembrance of the lonely sands, the quiet, breezy links, the richly-wrought ruins, the ancient church and all the medieval associations with which it is fraught, the brave fisher-folk, thinking naught of their countless unrecorded deeds of heroism, and passing quietly to and fro on their allotted tasks, must have afforded a contrast that was strong indeed.

JOHN BURNET OF BARNES.

CHAPTER XXIV.—HOW TWO OF HIS MAJESTY'S SERVANTS MET WITH THEIR DESERTS.

THE next morn broke fair and cloudless, and ere the sun was up I was awake, for little time must be lost if we sought to win to Smitwood ere the pursuit began. The folk of the cave were early risers, for the need for retiring early to rest made them so; and we broke our fast with a meal of cakes and broiled fish almost before daylight. Then I went out to enjoy the fresh air, for it was safe enough to be abroad at that hour. Nothing vexed the still air on the green hillside save the flapping peewits and the faint morning winds.

Marjory meantime ran out into the sunshine with all the gaiety in the world. She was just like a child let loose from school, for she was ever of a light heart, and care sat easily upon her. She left me to go out from the little glen, which was the entrance to the cave, into the wider dale of the Cor Water, which ran shallow between lone green braes. I heard her singing as she went down among the juniper-bushes and flinty rocks, and then it died away behind a little shoulder of hill.

So I was left to my own reflections on the plight in which I found myself. For the first

time a sort of wounded pride began to vex me. It made me bitter as gall to think of it, and by whose aid my misfortune had been effected. A sort of hopeless remorse came over me. Should I ever win back the place I had lost? Would the Burnets ever again be great gentlemen of Tweeddale, a power in the country-side, having men at their beck and call? Or would the family be gone for ever? Would I fall in the wilds, or live only to find my lands gone with my power; and would Marjory never enter Barns as its mistress? I could get no joy out of the morning for the thought; and as I wandered on the hillside I had little care of what became of me.

Now at this time there happened what roused me and set me once more at peace with myself. And though it came near to being a dismal tragedy, it was the draught which nerved me for all my later perils. And this was the manner of it.

Marjory, as she herself told me afterwards, had gone down to the little meadows by the burnside, where she watched the clear brown water and the fish darting in the eddies. She was thus engaged when she was aware of two horsemen who rode over the top of the glen and down the long hill on the other side. They were almost opposite before she perceived them, and there was no time for flight. Like a brave lass, she uttered no scream, but stood still that they might not see her. But it was of no avail. Their roving eyes could not miss in that narrow glen so fair a sight, and straightway one called out to the other that there was a girl at the burnside.

Now, had the twain been out on an ordinary foray it would have gone hard indeed with us; for they would have turned aside to search out the matter, and in all likelihood the hiding-place would have been discovered. But they had been out on some night-errand, and were returning in hot haste to their quarters at Abington, where their captain had none too gentle a temper. So they contented themselves with shouting sundry coarse raileries, and one, in the plenitude of his great-heartedness, fired his carbine at her. Without stopping further they rode on.

The bullet just grazed her arm above the wrist, cutting away a strip of dress. She cried out at the pain; but though frightened almost to death, she was brave enough to bide where she was, for if she had run straight to the cave it would have shown them the hiding-place. As soon as they passed out of view she came painfully up the slope, and I, who had heard the shot, and rushed straightway to the place whence it came, met her clasping her wounded wrist and with a pitiful white face.

'O Marjory, what ails you?' I cried.

'Nothing, John,' she answered; 'some soldiers passed me, and one fired. It has done me no

harm. But let us get to shelter lest they turn back.'

At her words I felt my heart rise in a sudden great heat of anger. I had never felt such passion before. It seemed to whelm and gulf my whole being, and my soul was steelled into one fixed resolution.

'Let me carry you, dear,' I said quietly, and lifting her, I bore her easily up the ravine to the cave.

When I got her within our shelter there was a very great to-do. The women ran up in grief to see the hurt, and the men at the news of the military wore graver faces. Master Lockhart, who was something of a surgeon, looked at the wound.

'Oh,' he says, 'this is nothing—a scratch and no more. It will be well as ever to-morrow. But the poor maid has had a fright which has made her weak. I ha'e some choice French brandy which I aye carry with me, for the fear of such accidents. Some of that will soon restore her.'

So he fetched from some unknown corner the bottle which he spake of, and when her lips had been moistened Marjory revived, and declared her weakness gone. When I saw that the wound was but trifling, the anger which had been growing in my heart side by side with my care wholly overmastered me. All my pride of house and name was roused at the deed. To think that the lady who was the dearest to me in the world should be thus maltreated by scurrilous knaves of dragoons stirred me to fury. I well knew that I could get no peace with the thought, and my inclination and good judgment alike made me take the course I followed.

I called to Nicol, where he sat supping his morning porridge by the fire, and he came to my side very readily.

'Get the two horses,' said I quietly, that none of the others might hear of my madness; 'one for me and one for yourself.' Now the beasts were stabled in the back part of the cave, which was roomy and high, though somewhat damp. The entrance thereto lay by a like rift in the hillside some hundred yards farther up the glen. When I had thus bidden my servant I sauntered out into the open air and awaited his coming with some impatience.

I asked him, when he appeared, if he had the pistols, for he had a great trick of going unarmed and trusting to his fleet legs and mother-wit rather than the good gifts of God to men—steel and gunpowder.

'Ay, laird, I ha'e them. Are ye gaun to shoot muir-fowl?'

'Yes,' said I; 'I am thinking of shooting a moor-fowl for my breakfast.'

Nicol laughed quietly to himself. He knew well the errand I was on, or he would not have consented so readily.

I knew that the two dragoons had ridden

straight down the Cor Water glen, making for the upper vale of Tweed, and thence to the Clyde hills. But this same glen of Cor is a strangely winding one; and if a man leave it and ride straight over the moorland he may save a matter of two miles, and arrive at the Tweed sooner than one who has started before him. The ground is rough, but, to one used to the hills, not so as to keep him from riding it with ease. Also, at the foot of the burn there is a narrow nick through which it thrusts itself in a little cascade to join the larger stream; and through this place the road passes, for all the hills on either side are steep and stony, and offer no foothold for a horse. Remembering all these things, a plan grew up in my mind which I hastened to execute.

With Nicol following, I rode aslant the low hills to the right, and came to the benty tableland which we had travelled the day before.

After maybe a quarter-hour's stiff riding we descended, and keeping well behind a low spur which hid us from the valley, turned at the end into the glen-mouth, at the confluence of the two waters. Then we rode more freely till we reached the narrows which I have spoken of, and there we halted. All was quiet, nor was there any sound of man or horse.

'Do you bide there,' said I to my servant, 'while I will wait here. Now I will tell you what I purpose to do. The two miscreants who shot Mistress Marjory are riding together on their way to their quarters. One will have no shot in his carbine; what arms the other has I cannot tell; but at any rate we two with pistols can hold them in check. Do you cover the one on the right when they appear, and above all things see that you do not fire.'

So we waited there, sitting motionless in our saddles, on that fair morning when all around us the air was full of crying snipe and twittering hill-linnets. The stream made a cheerful sound, and the little green ferns in the rocks nodded beneath the spray of the water. I found my mind misgiving me again and again for the headstrong prank on which I was entered, as unworthy of one who knew something of better things. But I had little time for self-communings, for we had scarce been there two minutes before we heard the grating of hoofs on the hill-gravel, and our two gentlemen came round the corner not twenty yards ahead.

At the sight of us they reined up and stared stock-still before them. Then I saw the hands of both reach to their belts, and I rejoiced at the movement, for I knew that the arms of neither were loaded.

'Gentlemen,' said I, 'it will be at your peril that you move. We have here two loaded pistols. We are not soldiers of his Majesty, so we have some skill in shooting. Let me assure you on my word that your case is a desperate one.'

At my words one of them still looked with a haughty, swaggering stare, but the jaw of the other dropped and he seemed like a man in excess of terror.

'To-day,' I went on, 'you have shot at a lady not half-an-hour ago. It is for this that I have come to have speech with you. Let us understand one another, my friends. I am an outlawed man, and one not easy to deal with. I am the Laird of Barnes—ah, I see you know the name—and let this persuade you to offer no resistance.'

One of the twain still stood helpless. The other's hand twitched as if he would draw his sword or reach his powder-flask, but the steely glitter of our barrels and my angry face deterred him.

'What do you want with us?' he said in a tone of mingled sulkiness and bravado. 'Let me tell you, I am one of his Majesty's dragoons, and you'll pay well for any ill you do to me. I care not a fig for you, for all your gentrifice. If you would but lay down your pop-guns and stand before me man to man, I would give you all the satisfaction you want.'

The fellow was a boor, but he spoke like a man, and I liked him for his words. But I replied grimly:

'I will have none of your bragging. Go and try that in your own sty, you who shoot at women. I will give you as long as I may count a hundred, and if before that you have not stripped off every rag you have on and come forward to me here, by God I will shoot you down like the dogs you are!'

And with this I began solemnly to count aloud.

At first they were still rebellious, but fear of the death which glinted to them from the barrels of the pistols won the mastery. Slowly and with vast reluctance they began to disrobe themselves of belt and equipments, of coat and jack-boots, till they stood before me in the mild spring air as stark as the day they were born. Their faces were heavy with malice and shame.

'Now,' said I to Nicol, 'dismount and lay on to these fellows with the flat of your sword. Give me your pistol, and if either makes resistance he will know how a bullet tastes. Lay on, and do not spare them.'

So Nicol, to whom the matter was a great jest, got down and laid on lustily. They shouted most piteously for mercy, but none they got, till the stout arm of my servant was weary.

'And now, gentlemen, you may remount your horses. Nay, without your clothes; you will ride more freely as you are. And give my best respects to your honourable friends, and tell them I wish a speedy meeting.'

But as I looked in the face of one, him who had been so terror-stricken at the outset, I saw that which I thought I recognised.

'You, fellow,' I cried, 'where have I seen you before?'

And as I looked again, I remembered a night in the year before, on the Alphen road, when I had stood over this very man and questioned him on his name and doings. So he had come to Scotland as one of the foreign troops.

'I know you, Jan Hamman,' said I. 'The great Doctor Johannes Burnetus of Lugdunum has not forgotten you. You were scarcely in an honest trade before, but you are in a vast deal less honest now. I vowed if ever I met you again to make you smart for your sins, and I think I have kept my word, though I had the discourtesy to forget your face at first sight. Good-morning, Jan; I hope to see you again ere long. Good-morning, gentlemen both.'

So the luckless pair rode off homeward, and what reception they met with from their captain and their comrades who shall say?

Meanwhile, when they were gone for some little time, Nicol and I rode back by a round-about path. When I began to reflect, I saw the full rashness of my action. I had burned my boats behind me with a vengeance. There

was no choice of courses before me now. The chase would be ten times hotter against me than before; and besides, I had given my pursuers some clue to my whereabouts. You may well ask if the danger to my love were not equally great, for that by this action they would know at least the air by which she had fled. I would answer that these men were of Gilbert's own company; and one, at least, of them, when he heard my name, must have had a shrewd guess as to who the lady was. My cousin's love affairs were no secret. If the man had revealed the tale in its entirety, his own action must necessarily have been exposed, and God help him who had insulted one whom Gilbert cared for! He would have flayed the skin from him at the very mention.

To my sober reason to-day the action seems foolhardy in the extreme, and more like a boyish frolic than the work of a man. But all I knew at the time, as I rode back, was that my pride was for the moment soothed and my heart mightily comforted.

THE SHAN STATES.



IN a recent issue of this magazine we called attention to the Chin Hills, bordering on Burma, and to the improvement which had taken place amongst the wild savages inhabiting them, who had always been a thorn in the side of the Burmese government, until we occupied Upper Burma some twelve years ago. A still greater degree of success has been attained in the Shan States, also bordering on Upper Burma, and some of them touching territory belonging to China, France, and Siam. Here we have to deal mostly with inhabitants sufficiently civilised to appreciate the blessings of peace, although during King Thebaw's sovereignty they were accustomed to scenes of anarchy and rebellion. The Shans, who form the majority of the inhabitants, are Buddhists in religion, and are keen traders, often travelling hundreds of miles in the dry season with heavy loads of merchandise to reach the nearest market. They have their own hereditary chiefs; and our policy, justified in its results, has been to support the rule of these chiefs, who now pay us the tribute they formerly gave, or were supposed to give, to the kings of Burma, whilst we interfere as little as possible with their customs, and support their authority. The record of the past year has been one of peace, progress, and prosperity for the Shan States, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma notices with pleasure that a sum of nearly six thousand rupees was contributed to the Famine Relief Fund by the chiefs and people of the southern Shan States. This by no means fully represents the amount of the charity displayed by

these good Buddhists. Crowds of Burmese came from the adjoining two districts in Upper Burma, which suffered last year from scarcity owing to the failure of the rains, to purchase rice. For several days two of the Shan chiefs gratuitously fed all travellers passing along the public roads between sunrise and sunset, besides sending seven hundred and fifty bushels of grain by Buddhist priests for free distribution amongst those who had no means to purchase food. Fortunately there was an excellent harvest in the Shan States, and the chiefs had paid attention to the opening out of cart-roads, enabling trade to be carried on to an extent previously unknown. Unhusked rice was selling at about one-sixth of the price asked for it in Burma, pointing to the advisability of an extension of the Burma railway system to this fertile country; for, except in years of scarcity, however good the roads are, cart-hire is too costly to allow of grain, however cheap, being carried any great distance at a profit.

Amongst imports Swiss condensed milk in tins bulks largely. The Shans do not care for fresh milk, and allow the calves to take all their mothers produce. But they like the sweetened canned article, eating it with rice and rice-cakes. The sepoys and natives of India settled in the Shan States are the only milk-venders, and they and the Europeans are the only consumers of fresh milk. As cattle thrive well all over the Shan States, milk might easily be preserved on the spot, and be sold very much cheaper than the imported condensed milk.

Our French neighbours have tried to get over

the exchange difficulty by valuing their *piastre de commerce* at two rupees six annas, but at Kengtung, the nearest British Shan State, it only fetches two rupees, and is often melted down by traders into lumps and used in crude silver as a medium of exchange. Trade was carried on to a small extent between the Shan States and the French provinces, in a friendly way and with no remarkable incidents, in the past year.

Mr A. H. Hildebrand, C.I.E., the able British superintendent of the southern Shan States, points with pride to the fact that it is only a decade since these states were annexed and the chiefs acknowledged the suzerainty of the British Crown. The record of progress in these short ten years is not unworthy of the British government, under which it has taken place, and reflects the highest credit on the half-dozen British officers who assist Mr Hildebrand and the chiefs in governing states many times larger than England. There were no disturbances in the past year, and but little crime. Three durbars were held, numerous attended by the chiefs and their followers. These same chiefs were at each other's throats before our advent, but now only vie with each other in improving communications with a view to increasing trade. Most of them recognise the fact that their own positions and emoluments are improved when their subjects are prosperous and contented, and as far as in them lies they work loyally for this end. The superintendent, who spends at least six months of the year in visiting the various states, notes the great improvements visible in the various buildings. Substantial wooden houses are now taking the place of the bamboo huts which formerly predominated. Gardens neatly fenced in are the rule now in the principal places, instead of the exception, whilst roadside trees are also planted and carefully tended for the benefit of the shade they confer. Every variation of climate is observable in the Shan States. The valleys are often insufferably hot in the dry season; but the hills, varying from three thousand to five thousand feet in height, give an almost European climate, and nearly every description of English fruit and vegetable is produced in perfection. The out-turn of potatoes was so large last year in one state that in some bazaars they were selling at two pice, or about one halfpenny, per *visé* (three and three-quarter pounds). Their cultivation continues steadily to increase. Wheat is also grown, and its production might be much larger if a railway joined the Rangoon line and ensured a ready market for it. The seaports of Lower Burma are dependent now on Calcutta for their wheat and potatoes; but, judging from appearances, there is no reason why, in another decade, Rangoon should not export instead of importing wheat, if only a branch-line of railway connected the present Rangoon and Mandalay line with the fertile southern Shan States.

The superintendent regrets that nothing has

been done yet in the direction of starting a school which the sons of chiefs might attend. He is assured it will be built next year. The chiefs have promised to support it. It is hardly advisable for them to send their sons to Rangoon, away from their homes; but at Taunggyi, the headquarters of the superintendent, where many of them have residences, and where they would be under Mr Hildebrand's eye, the advantages of such an educational establishment would be great.

The government are to be congratulated on the successful administration of the Shan States, and on the officers chosen to carry out their policy. It has been a success partly on this account, but also no doubt on account of the fact that, instead of the fanatical Mohammedan tribes who yearly, in some part or other of our scientific frontier on the north-west of India, are the cause of such constant warfare and disturbance, we have in the south-east comparatively peaceful and law-abiding Buddhists, satisfied with our rule, and ready to acknowledge that, although a foreign one, it is an improvement on its predecessor. It is only by acknowledging that we have such contented races in the Shan States to deal with that we can carry on the administration as economically as we do, without a single British soldier on the spot, and with so few British officers, sepoy, and policemen. Both rulers and ruled deserve to share the credit of the present happy and prosperous state of things in the Shan States, which has every prospect of being lasting.

English visitors to India would do well to pay the Shan States a visit. Taunggyi, the headquarters, is within four days' ride of Thazi, on the Rangoon and Mandalay railway line. It has a club with about a dozen members, who are always willing to show hospitality to the stranger. Twenty miles to the south-west of Taunggyi is a large lake ten miles in length and three in breadth. Fort Stedman, where a Burma rifle-battalion is quartered, is on its shores. The lake-men paddle their canoes with one foot, balancing themselves on the other. Good snipe and duck shooting is to be had on this lake, whilst in other parts of the states are to be found bison, bear, cheetas, deer, sambur, and occasionally tigers. A sportsman might pass a few months in many worse places than the Shan States, where he would be welcomed by any of his own countrymen he might meet on his travels, and also be certain to find in every village hospitable Buddhists who would do all in their power to make him comfortable. Taunggyi is spoken of as a possible sanatorium for Burma. In the hottest weather the thermometer seldom exceeds eighty-five degrees in the shade, whilst in December and January it rarely rises higher than seventy. At night a fire is welcomed, and turning into bed with a couple of blankets the usual thing. It is to be hoped that the southern Shan States will some day be made more accessible to travellers; but in the meanwhile, for those who have

leisure, there is no spot in the East better worth visiting, or from which one would return with happier recollections of a bright and cheery population, or greater gratification at the happy results which have followed in the short time which has elapsed since the British annexation. That was the first event in this generation to give peace and prosperity to these fertile hills and valleys.

It may be mentioned that the Shan chief of Hsipaw, one of the northern Shan States, who has visited England with his sons, is one of the two Asiatic nominated members in the new Burma Legislative Council, which held its first sitting in Rangoon in November last. This chief has had an eventful and romantic history. Rebellious against King Thebaw some seventeen or eighteen years ago, he travelled in Siam and Burma. In Rangoon he seemed to think he could exercise the same power of life and death over his followers that he did in his own state; and having information that one of them was plotting against him, he deliberately shot him. For

this he was tried and found guilty of murder by a jury. The government, however, pardoned him, and there is not the slightest doubt now that the chief thought he was acting within his rights as a sovereign ruler, and that he went in fear of his own life from the supposed treachery of his follower, on whom he took such summary vengeance. From the date of his release this chief seems to have thrown in his lot with us, and has proved himself a capable and energetic ruler. His nomination on the Burma Council has gratified both the chief and his subjects, and his state of Hsipaw is progressing favourably in the paths of civilisation and good government. He some time ago was made a Companion of the Indian Empire, and is very proud of the distinction. It is perhaps too much to hope that he will ever publish his life and recollections, but they would, if truthfully told, form interesting and instructive reading to the British, Burmese, and Shan public, abounding in sensational incidents of love and war.

'SANTA ANNA.'

CHAPTER III.



HE disappearance of the so-called Da Vinci created quite a mild sensation in London. The papers gave it in the same type which they devoted to Baron Brantano's latest and greatest scheme—nothing less than the syndicating and running of the Turkish Empire as a limited company, capital four hundred millions.

For the next two or three days the life of Messrs Hunt & Roscoe was anything but a bed of roses. The Piccadilly establishment was haunted by detectives, who dropped in at all sorts of times and asked all kinds of personal questions. The partners were wonderfully shy of answering some of these.

The robbery appeared to have been worked by way of the cellar. Through an opening in the grating the padlock had been filed away; indeed, the outside of the trap still bore the marks of the tool.

The circular trap had then been pulled up, and an entrance to the cellar effected. A jemmy had been forcibly used in removing certain obstacles in the way of doors, and thus the shop was reached. Afterwards a fireproof safe had been opened, and the picture abstracted from its frame. The whole thing was the work of some one who knew the craft passing well.

Usually sufferers from this kind of thing are prone to gird at the tortoise-like movements of the police. Hunt & Roscoe found the authorities

much too busy. Shorter noticed this and wondered. And when he entered the shop two days later, and found Inspector Morton there, he wondered still more.

'I think we've got your man,' the officer said cheerfully.

Roscoe's jaw dropped. He muttered something. Why should this joyful news have disturbed him so terribly? However, later in the day the recalcitrant burglar was able to prove a satisfactory *alibi*, and Roscoe beamed. Shorter was present on both occasions.

'Afraid of the forgery coming out, perhaps,' he mused.

Roscoe was in a frame of mind now to listen to all that Shorter had to say. The latter explained his visit to Pau, and what had come of it. Then Shorter proceeded to allude to the fact that Moss next door was the man who had brought Baron Brantano into the skein.

'That struck me as jolly suspicious,' Shorter remarked, 'especially as Moss has not been near any one for his commission. So I have had two days' hunting up the antecedents of our friend Moss.'

'A man of indifferent reputation,' Roscoe said severely.

'Rather. Real name Morris, and no more a Jew than you are. Narrowly escaped a conviction for arson, Surrey Sessions, 1878; twelve months in connection with a bogus money-lending office, 1884; two years over those Paris picture frauds,

1887; then passing as the Count of Malibran. You remember?'

'Perfectly. But he's been all right for the last five years, for certain.'

'Hasn't been found out, you mean, Mr Roscoe. He's in this swindle for a certainty; how, I shall make it my work to discover. The idea of getting that telegram delivered to you was immense.'

Roscoe changed the subject. He did not feel that his own share in the transaction was one he would care to have blazoned on the housetops.

'What's your next move?' he asked.

'I'm going to see Manders. Lord Maplehurst accompanies me. I'll let you know the result of the interview the first thing in the morning.'

Maplehurst and his companion found Manders not only perfectly sober, but also engrossed in the rare occupation of painting. He nodded to Shorter with an air of resigned boredom, and motioned his other visitor to a seat.

'This is Lord Maplehurst,' said the detective.

'Another of 'em?' Manders muttered. 'Oh, this is the branded article, I suppose?'

'I assure you I am the genuine article,' said his lordship; 'and as my character is at stake, I hope you will do your best in assisting me to clear it. The man who passed himself off as me was Pearson, my late secretary. I should very much like to know how you first met him, and under what circumstances; also, how and when you copied my picture.'

'That is easily told,' Manders replied. 'This Pearson came to me as yourself, and said I had been recommended to him by Moss of Piccadilly as an expert picture-copyist. I'm *facile princeps* at this sort of thing; learnt it in Amsterdam, you understand. His lordship made no bones about the matter; he was desperately hard up, and wanted to dispose of his picture to some private collector. The idea was to paint another picture to hang in the place of the original. With the aid of a genuine old canvas and the original before me, I worked away in the bogus lord's chambers in Albemarle Street, and in three weeks it was finished. It's all easy enough when you get the touch. I got £100 for my trouble, and I deemed myself pretty well paid. That's all I know.'

'And, now you know why your picture was required,' Shorter observed, 'can you call to mind any suspicious circumstances connected with it?'

'Certainly I can,' Manders replied. 'In the first place, this Pearson seemed a little bit annoyed when he slipped out Moss's name. And the day I went to get my money Moss was in Albemarle Street. They were in the next room to the one I was shown into, examining the picture. I remember Moss distinctly saying: "That will do the touch all right!" Moss went away soon after without seeing me; and when Pearson came in he seemed put out by my presence, and asked me if I had been there long. I suppose my manner reassured him.'

Shorter's eyes glistened. Fortune was favouring him in this matter.

'This is a complicated case,' he said—'a very complicated case. Of course you know that Messrs Hunt & Roscoe had your work substituted for the picture they bought?'

Manders smiled. We all know the famous aphorism that there is something in the misfortunes of our friends which is not displeasing to us, and any fraud perpetrated upon the dealers always filled Manders with unalloyed satisfaction. It was the same kind of shamed joy we all feel when we read in the press of a money-lender being made a victim.

'Of course I do,' he said. 'Rare joke, wasn't it? If I liked to open my mouth I could ruin those beggars in a week.'

'I sincerely hope you will do nothing of the kind,' Maplehurst put in. 'I have done you no harm; and you could ruin me as well.'

'I was only jesting,' said Manders, who, in spite of whisky and abnormal hours, was still a gentleman. 'I will say nothing.'

Shorter expressed his satisfaction. He pointed out to Manders that a dual fraud had been committed, and that any blind confidence on the latter's part might lead to the escape of Moss, at any rate; and Manders having again pledged himself to secrecy, his visitors left.

There was one lingering drop of gall in Shorter's cup. He was getting on splendidly—far better, indeed, than he had expected; but he was only a private inquiry agent. Whoever got the public credit for the arrest of Moss and the solution of the mystery, it would not be he.

At this stage it became absolutely necessary to consult the police. If a raid was to be made upon Moss's premises, the police alone could do it. Shorter invaded Scotland Yard, and there interviewed Morton, the latter being the officer who had the Piccadilly burglary part of the mystery in hand. Morton received his visitor coldly, as a captain in the Guards might have met one holding similar rank in the volunteers.

'Got anything to tell me?' he said. 'In our line we recognise the axiom that you can learn something from every fool.'

'That's the very reason why I came here,' Shorter replied, with cheerful equanimity. 'We are going to teach one another, my friend.'

'Oh, indeed! Tell me something worth knowing, and you shall hear what you like.'

'A bargain! In the first place, I'll tell you all about that picture.'

'I know all about that confounded picture already.'

'No, you don't. You don't know that the one stolen from Piccadilly is a forgery. Now, I'm going to make a full confession to you.'

And Shorter proceeded to open Morton's eyes considerably. When he had digested the facts he began to revolve them in his mind slowly.

'This may be of great value later on,' he said; 'but for the present the knowledge is useless. My business is to find who stole that picture.'

'Have you got any one in your mind?' Shorter asked.

'Well, I don't mind telling you that I have. But on one condition only.'

'Fire away. One gets nothing for nothing in these hard times.'

'Very well, then. You have told me certain things. In all probability the whole of this case will be placed in my hands later on. I see you have got a clue to the founder of the scheme.'

'I have. I won't tell you the why and wherefore at present. I'm only telling you this because I'm more or less bound to come to you. I can help you, and you can help me, because I'm certain that this later development is part and parcel of the same plot.'

'Quite right. But come to the point, man.'

'I'm coming,' said Shorter. 'The author of the scheme is Moss of Piccadilly. You know all about him, of course?'

'Rather. And I'm much obliged to you for the tip. I won't interfere with you more than I can help. What do you want?'

'To know if you have done anything *re* the burglary.'

Morton placed his hands together judicially. He proceeded to lay down his points calmly and logically. Not without good cause was he spoken of at the Bar as the best witness in the metropolitan police force.

'Well, I think I have,' he said. 'The whole thing is vague and shadowy at present, but I fancy I've got the right man. In our business, as I need hardly tell you, one thing so frequently leads to another. The fellow in question is quite a stranger to us; I can find out nothing about him. The name he gives is, of course, assumed, and he refuses his address. Looks a respectable man, too. He was handed over to the police drunk and incapable at Waterloo, charged with travelling without a ticket. Where he got in and how far he travelled we can't yet say. On being searched we found upon him some hundreds of pounds in Bank of Bechuanaland notes. If I can dribble on with a remand or two I shall be able to trace them in time. They may prove a lot, and, on the other hand, they may prove nothing. But that is not quite all. There were letters in the fellow's pocket, none of them signed or headed, and one of them clearly relates to some fraud in connection with a picture. The letters "S. A." occur more than once. To my mind "S. A." means "Santa Anna."'

'Where is this fellow now?' Shorter asked.

'In Holloway, under remand for a fortnight. By that time I hope to have all the strings in my hands.'

'I suppose I can see these letters, Morton?'

Morton crossed over to a safe, opened it, and produced two half-sheets of paper. Shorter examined them carefully, and as he did so his eyes flashed. He said nothing, however, for to go out of his way to enlighten Morton was no part of his business.

'Valuable clues, no doubt,' he said as he carefully studied a sentence. 'Still, it would take some time to identify the writer. If you hear any more in the meantime let me know.'

Shorter rose as he spoke, and Morton gave the desired promise. Then the former went westward slowly and thoughtfully.

'This has been a lucky day for me,' he muttered. 'But my clients are keeping something from me, all the same. What an ass Morton is! In less than an hour's time I shall know who wrote those letters.'

And in less than an hour's time an elderly gentleman, with blue glasses and his hand tied up, dropped casually into Mr Moss's establishment and began to potter about the pictures there.

The proprietor of the establishment came forward. There was nothing lavish or gorgeous about the place, it being a mere sandwich sliced in between the big premises on either side, a slip cut from Hunt & Roscoe's some years before. Pictures there were few, neither would a *connoisseur* have sighed for their possession.

Shorter took stock of all these things. Rents in Piccadilly, even for sandwiches, run high, and obviously Mr Moss had other means of making profits large and yet not ostentatious enough to bring him in conflict with the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

There was nobody else in the shop; even the assistant was absent, a fact upon which Shorter had counted in working out his little scheme. Moss came forward rubbing his hands politely.

'What can I do for you, sir?' he asked.

'A mere trifle,' Shorter mumbled. 'Something pretty to suit a girl of about fourteen. Hang in a little boudoir and that kind of thing. About £5 is the figure to which I should feel disposed to go.'

Moss indicated a taking little landscape, and added the perfectly mendacious rider that it had cost him £15 a year before, exclusive of the frame. Plenty of the same kind can be found in every print-shop, painted by clever artists at so much per dozen and a discount for cash.

The commercial side of the matter troubled Shorter but little. He permitted Moss to choose for him, and to pack up the parcel.

'Stop a minute,' he said; 'it's for a godchild of mine, a birthday present. Would you mind writing a few lines for me on a slip of paper and enclosing the same in the parcel?'

Moss raised no objection. Then Shorter dictated as follows:

'To my dear godchild, S. A., from the other S. A., with best love and wishes for a happy birthday.'

Moss scribbled off the message, and handed it to his customer for approval. Shorter's eyes again flashed as he read.

'Perfectly well,' he said. 'Kindly pack it up and send the parcel to the address I will dictate. Here's a five-pound note. The parcel postage will be threepence? Thanks. Good-day;' and Shorter shuffled out of the shop.

The parcel was consigned to some imaginary Sarah Allen at his own private address, Hampstead way. Needless to say it was the handwriting, not the picture, that Shorter required.

'It's the same fist,' he muttered to himself—'the same for a million. Moss wrote those letters that Morton showed me. The "S. A." is identical. And now to report progress to my esteemed employers.'

A little later, clothed and in his right mind, Shorter entered the establishment of Messrs Hunt & Roscoe. He found the latter at his post, looking anxious and worried. He seemed nervous also.

'Have you any further information?' the junior partner asked.

'Heaps,' was the cheerful reply. 'I told you Moss was in the conspiracy, and I am right. Any more about the burglary?'

'Confound the burglary!' Roscoe flashed out. 'I'm sick of it. And in any case we lose nothing by it, as you know. What you have to do is to lay your hands upon the man who has stolen the real picture. Until then we can't hope to recover our money from Forrest's people.'

'I suppose not,' responded Shorter, with ruminative forefinger to his nose; 'but my theory is that the thief and the burglar are one and the same person. And Morton is pretty sure he's got him.'

Roscoe turned pale. Then he laughed scornfully, if forcibly.

'So they have told us before,' he said. 'They were equally certain about the other man. This will be another felonious Mrs Harris.'

'I don't think so,' Shorter replied. 'Nobody ever saw Mrs Harris, and they have actually got this one. I'll tell you what Morton said.'

And Shorter proceeded to do so. Roscoe followed dismally. He wiped the beads of perspiration from his face.

'Shorter,' he whispered, 'this sounds like our man. It must be stopped at any cost. If Crouther splits to save himself?'

'Crouther! You actually know the name of the man!'

'Of course we do. But you are all in the dark. Our biggest customer came to purchase the "Santa Anna." We could not say it was sold; we could not declare how we had been taken in. So we procured a professional burglar, who for a ten-

pound note burgled our premises for us in our presence, and stole the picture, after which it was destroyed.'

Shorter was too astonished to laugh.

'But the marks on the grating?' he gasped.

'The grating was removed into the shop under pretence of coals, and then filed. If the police have really got Crouther we are lost. The thing will become public property, and we shall be laughed out of the trade.'

'Well, it can't be helped now,' Shorter said consolingly. 'In any case, you can't get your money back from Forrest.'

Whilst the subject was still under discussion a hansom cab dashed up to the door, and Lord Maplehurst emerged. He seemed to be considerably ruffled, considering the usual placidity of his temper.

'Confound it all!' he cried. 'Look here, I've just left your painter friend, Manders. I picked him up in the Strand, eloquently intoxicated, and ready to blab all he knows to the first fool who came along. I put him in a cab and sent him home. Then I deemed it as well to come along here and warn you. That fellow will have to be carefully watched.—Eh?'

The last remark was addressed to a burly individual who advanced into the shop, and who touched the speaker on the shoulder.

'Lord Maplehurst, I think?' he said.

'My name, right enough. What do you want?'

'Warrant for your arrest, my lord,' was the reply. 'Lordship knows all about it: Court of Chancery, and all that. Very sorry, but'—

'Do you mean to say I'm your prisoner?'

'Yes, my lord; and it's my duty to conduct you to Holloway forthwith. No, my lord; I must take you straight there.'

Maplehurst made no reply. He was too utterly staggered. He allowed the bailiff to lead him gently away. Shorter was the first to recover himself.

'My lord,' he exclaimed, 'what a farce for the Gaiety this would make!'

The partners made no rejoinder, and Shorter lapsed into silence. The bogus burglary had recalled an old theory to his mind—the theory as to the way in which his clients had been swindled. That Hunt & Roscoe had bought the real 'Santa Anna' Shorter had been convinced from the first.

'Moss's shop was once part of yours?' he asked.

'Years ago,' Roscoe replied languidly. 'We let part of it under the old lease, and it has remained separate ever since. That door yonder used to lead into the part which is now occupied by Moss.'

Shorter was alert in a moment. The door was fastened up, and apparently had not been opened for years. But Shorter had been long enough

in his profession to know that what the eye sees is generally the last thing to be credited.

'Um,' he muttered; 'give me one of your most powerful magnifying-glasses, please.'

With this in his hand, and mounted on a chair, Shorter examined the door critically. As he jumped to the ground his eyes were sparkling.

'I told you Moss was in this business all the way through,' he said, 'and the more I see the more convinced I am of the fact. That door has been recently opened.'

'Impossible!' the partners cried in a breath.

'Why impossible? Aren't doors made to open? Look for yourselves. See the marks left where those bolts and bars have been pulled. On the top of the door there is no dirt at all, and the hinges are smothered with recent oil. Moreover, these screws have been removed, for I can make out steel filings wrenched off by a screwdriver applied not so long ago. And look here; this panel has moved half-an-inch. The beading on the other side has been taken off, and the panel pulled away so as to give the people on the other side free play with the bars. Pooh! I can point out to you a hundred proofs of my statement.'

Shorter proceeded to do so. Roscoe was satisfied so far.

'But what good could it do?' he asked.

'Plain as a pikestaff,' Shorter replied. 'Everything was arranged beforehand. There is the way in, and there stands the safe where the "Santa Anna" was.'

'Which safe I locked myself and pocketed the key,' said Roscoe.

'My dear sir, these rascals had three months to perfect their scheme. This Pearson would have put obstacles in his master's way till his confederates were ready. Did you never hear of an impression of a safe-key being taken?'

'The thing is just possible,' Hunt murmured.

'Our present staff'—

'Present staff will keep,' Shorter put in. 'Discharged anybody lately?'

Hunt explained that they had done so. An assistant named Frederic, a Swiss, who had been with them for two months, had been dismissed a week or two before for insolence. The lad proved

a good servant; he had come from Paris with excellent references, and the firm had seen him depart with regret.

Before Shorter left the shop he had extracted all the information he required. The next day he spent ostensibly hunting for rooms in Canonbury, and ere night had fallen he found his way westward once more with a photograph of Monsieur Frederic in his pocket. That he had deliberately purloined the same from the album of a whilom landlady of Frederic's did not trouble Shorter's conscience in the least.

Hunt and Roscoe recognised the face directly.

'And a capital likeness, too,' Hunt summed up the argument.

Shorter declined to be drawn, however, as to the clue he was working out. Before bedtime—if a detective is supposed to share in such a luxury—Shorter had dropped in quite casually upon Morton.

The latter appeared to be gloomy and abstracted.

'Well, and what do you want?' he asked pointedly.

'My friend,' responded the visitor, 'I came in for a sight of your engaging and ingenuous countenance. It is a continual feast to me; and incidentally I may ask if you will give a little information as to somebody else's face—a photo?'

Morton's professional instinct was aroused.

'Hand it over, then,' he said.

Shorter proceeded to do so. Morton relaxed into a smile.

'Still on the same trail,' he said. 'Yes, I do know the fellow. You remember Moss getting into trouble years ago for those Paris picture frauds? You do? Well, one of the gang got off by the skin of his teeth—a chap named Lemaire. I was in the case, you know.'

'Yes, yes,' Shorter said eagerly.

'Very well, then. Your friend of the photo and Lemaire are one and the same. I would swear to the fact anywhere.'

Shorter said nothing. All the same, the crux of the mystery was his. He knew now how the genuine picture had been taken and the forgery substituted. And how easy it all seemed now that it was explained!

RHUBARB, THE RHEUM-FOE.



WITH spring comes ever the rheum-dish. In shape of jam or tart, pie or pudding, the inevitable rhubarb appears upon the table; and, as if in dutiful answer to its annual coming, all folk feel compelled to eat of it because of the marvellous power of body-refreshing it is known to hold.

Rheum Rhaponticum is the curious name of

the English garden order of the rhubarb-plant, and of it there are several species, the rounded knobs of which, instinct with pulsing life, push upward yearly from the bare, brown ground, and give us one of the earliest indications of Nature's great annual self-renewal.

Of this plant the petioles or leaf-stalks only are used for food. Of the leaves no use seems to be as yet made in England, unless it be for fruit-packing

purposes; though some farmers' wives prefer them to dock or lettuce leaves as cool butter-wrappers, and cottage-women, to whom meat-safes are unattainable luxuries, like to lay them over their cold joints in summer as a sure means of keeping away the blow-fly. Abroad they are bruised and used to allay the inflammation showing in wounded limbs, just as the silver-lined colt's-foot leaf is used with us in old-world houses.

The word 'petiole' is derived from *petiolus*, which signifies 'a little foot.' The rhubarb-petioles form the foot-stalks for each spreading leaf, and into their juicy composition enter substances of the utmost value in the matter of the purification of the blood and, through it, of the body generally. Oxalic acid, the sour principle of sorrel, is strongly in the juice, and with it mingles also, in large measure, malic acid, the tart property of the apple and of the gooseberry. Neither of these two keen acids mingling in the rhubarb has power to counteract, or make neutral, the other; hence the petioles become doubly strong in tart principles, and to this mixing of the acids they owe their peculiar flavour. What wonder that rhubarb is remarkable for sourness, seeing the twofold acid-strength it has? And thus we know why teeth are set on edge directly at the common sight in spring of hardy urchins chewing chunks of raw rhubarb, as children are prone to do.

In the leaves and in the roots the acids mingle also, though in a proportion different from that in the petioles. In the roots, too, much oxalate of lime is present, and this bestows on them a peculiarly valuable medicinal property, as is exemplified in a high degree in the Turkey rhubarb to be obtained in every chemist's shop. The kind grown for root-supplying is *Rheum officinale*, and this provides most of the sorts sold under the names of 'Turkey' and 'Russian' rhubarb. By the latter part of its name—that is, *officinale*—is understood a medicine approved by the faculty, and kept prepared by the apothecary in his *officina*, or shop—properly, a workshop.

Binoxalate of potash is present in some quantity in the petioles of all kinds of Rheum. The combination of the potash, an alkali, with the different acids produces most valuable salts of various sorts; and these take action immediately on the membranes of the body wherever they come in contact with them. Through the eating of rhubarb the stomach is highly stimulated and all the intestinal juices excited to good action; the salts enter the liver and the blood, doing excellent work in both; the acids, by inherent astringent property, clear away all unnecessary and unwholesome mucus, overpowering and neutralising all weaker acids of noxious nature generated in the tissues; and the alkalies aid the bile-flow and help the pancreatic juice to do its work of fat-emulsifying. Thus rhubarb labours in the human organs,

every one of which receives its benefits abundantly.

The Rheum-plant is a natural tonic that braces up the whole system—a general strengthening and purifying agent; and its good properties are brought out and improved by proper cooking. Especially does rhubarb prove a good friend to the owner of a bad skin, for it has a peculiar property of tightening the relaxed and gaping pores, that yawn to receive the tiny stoppers of dirt-particles ever afloat in the air, which, once caught by the pores, become unsightly blackheads a little later. If the blackheads be already present in unwelcome arrays of ugliness, the astringent rhubarb-influence is able to expel them, causing a rapid increase of the skin action; thus it becomes a sure complexion cleanser, and, as a consequence, a beauty-giver.

Through stimulation of the liver, and by the bestowing of restored tone on that organ, this good food-medicine can remove the dull look from the eyes, take the yellow tinge from the flabby eyeballs, which it renders firm again, and destroy the baggy, livid appearance that a slow-working liver is wont to bring under the lower eyelid. By taking the heaviness from the eye it also takes the tired lines that would speedily develop into the wrinkle so dreaded as the age-sign, though often it is more likely to be the signet set by weariness. Through the giving of salts much needed by the blood, that the vegetable scarcity of winter is apt to impoverish, rhubarb becomes a preventer of pimples, and scurvy itself would yield ground to it as quickly as to lemon-juice. Skin-blotches cannot long afflict the eater of it; and one excited well-nigh into feverishness would find his system cooled deliciously and his nerves soothed into restfulness by means of a long draught of life-giving rhubarb juice made palatable and sweet.

For a gratefully-acid and most cooling summer drink can be very quickly made when this good garden-gift is especially plentiful, by infusing a couple of well-crushed, raw stalks in a jugful of boiling water, which is then sweetened to taste and left to cool. This is rhubarb tea. Apple tea, which some prefer, is made in exactly the same way.

The inhabitant of far Eastern lands well recognises the sterling qualities of the Rheum-plant, and thankfully accepts the gifts it has in store for the human body; and he puts it to splendid uses. From the Orientals, left by us so far behind in many ways, came the knowledge our doctors hold of the plant's medicinal properties; and they use the petioles extensively—especially those of *R. Ribes*—in the preparation of that most cooling and delicious drink, sherbet, the making of which prevails throughout the Orient. The Turks and the Persians—who are most noted for the excellence of their snowy, foaming beverage, the sherbet sold in all bazaars and found so cunningly commingled,

so gratefully sweet and yet acidulated—could tell of rhubarb gardens rifled for the sherbet-making, did they care to speak their secrets. Rheumatism is an ailment not greatly prevalent in the sherbet-lands; and, in spite of our damp, insular climate, it would be less of a curse here if the folk would only make closer acquaintance with the rheum-foe, and use it more.

Rheum its name is, rheum's enemy though it be, and that name was given because the roots and petioles were found to be sovereign specifics in the curing of all rheumy, or mucous, disorders.

Anciently all ailments were ascribed to the flowing of rheum, or humour, through the parts affected, and that painful muscle-ill we term rheumatism received its name because of this notion. It is uric acid generated in the blood that is the dire cause of the pangs endured by the rheumatic person, and this acid is neutralised by the alkaline matter contained in the rheum-foe, and by the strong counteracting powers of its oxalic and malic acids. Any excess of limy matter or chalky deposits in the system can be neutralised by the same agencies.

Various are the methods of rhubarb-cookery. A favourite dish with children is the petiole well sweetened, stewed with a little water, and flavoured with the peel of a lemon. Orange-peel is a good flavouring for it, and cloves with rhubarb are found excellent. Rhubarb juice extracted, mingled bulk for bulk with water, and made into syrup, using therefor a pound of white sugar to each pint, makes a drink-foundation of the best teetotal kind, and it will keep a long while.

Rhubarb wine is a strong intoxicant, as abstainers from spirituous drinks ought to know. The wine generates in keeping, through its fermentation, a really large quantity of alcohol, and when two or three years old is as cunning a betrayer of the unwary as ever was port wine. A lady who was a total abstainer once proved this at the cost of her self-respect. Being thirsty one day at a friend's house, she drank off a tumblerful of rhubarb wine. 'Oh dear, whatever is the matter with the street?' she exclaimed on getting into the open air. 'All the houses are moving about, and it's awfully uphill somehow, yet my feet keep dropping into some dreadful ditches!'

A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE.

By LUCY HARDY.



LITTLE did I imagine, when I accepted the invitation of my newly-made acquaintance to visit at his country house, what a singular and terrible experience was to befall me while under his roof. I had been weather-bound at a small Swiss hotel, and had there fallen into friendly chat with the only other English visitor—a middle-aged gentleman, who, as I discovered in course of conversation, shared many of my peculiar tastes and hobbies, and also proved to be acquainted with some of my own friends. Intimacies ripen quickly in similar circumstances, and before parting I had received and accepted an invitation to pay my travelling companion a visit as soon as I returned to England—an engagement of which a note addressed to my club reminded me soon after I arrived in London.

I am an engineer by profession, and devoted to the study of mechanics in every form; my new acquaintance, whom I will call Mr Beltram, though 'a mere idle country squire,' as he called himself, was equally addicted to the same pursuit. Possessed of a comfortable private income, he had amused himself by travelling and studying mechanics *en amateur* (as George Selwyn did executions) until the death of an uncle, some six years previously, had placed him in possession of a small estate in the west of England, and of an old-fashioned country mansion, which

he had been amusing himself for some while past in altering and fitting up with his own inventions and arrangements. The house, indeed, though thoroughly comfortable in its appointments, was as full of whimsical surprises as was the mansion of the famous Winstanley (builder of the first Eddystone Lighthouse), where, 'if you sat in a certain chair, the arms clasped you around; . . . if you entered an harbour you found yourself afloat on a canal.' Bells could be rung by all manner of unexpected devices, and fountains in the garden set agoing from a distance; but what my friend chiefly prided himself upon was having erected a lift working on a principle of his own invention, which he conceived to be immeasurably superior to any yet in use. When the mechanism was fully explained to me I cannot say that I thought it differed very materially from that of most other similar contrivances; but my host was as pleased with his lift as is a child with a new toy; and I refrained from damping his enthusiasm by ill-timed criticisms.

I passed a couple of days agreeably enough in my new quarters. Mr Beltram, who was a bachelor, possessed an excellent housekeeper, cook, and cellar, and was a kindly and genial host, although fuller of eccentricities than I had perceived on our first acquaintance. He was a dabbler in many arts and sciences, had a laboratory on the ground floor and an observatory

on the roof of his house, but was, withal, a clever and highly-educated man, who had read much, travelled far, and seen the world in various ways. We lingered late in the smoking-room on the third evening of my visit, Beltram expounding a new idea by which he believed something akin to that philosopher's stone of mechanics, perpetual motion, could be discovered. I rather differed from his views, and we grew eager and excited, though in quite a friendly way, as we compared sketches and figures; continuing our discussion even in the lift, in which we were slowly rising to our bedrooms—it would have broken Beltram's heart had I suggested walking up the staircase. The lift was worked by the occupants, Beltram taking charge of it on this occasion, and halted mechanically for a moment or two at each floor we passed. A small landing, some four feet long by three and a half feet wide, met the lift at each of these halting-places; these small landings being closed at the other end by a door which gave entrance to the passage which ran along that floor of bedrooms. Like many old-fashioned country houses, the Manor was built with a huge square hall, having galleries round it, upon which the bedrooms opened. The lift had been erected in one corner of this hall, and was connected with the various floors by these small landings, underneath which the machinery of the lift was stored.

'Well, here's your floor,' said Beltram as the lift made one of its usual halts for a few moments, 'and so I'll say good-night. I'm going up to my observatory to have a look at the sky; there's a fall of stars predicted for to-night, and I mean to keep a lookout for them. I suppose you won't care to come up farther?'

'Thanks, no; I'm rather sleepy,' I replied, stepping out on the landing. 'I'll run over those figures again,' I called out as the lift swept upwards; 'but I really think you will find I am right regarding the pressure to the square inch.' But Mr Beltram had already soared away into space. The lift when once started could not, without a deal of complicated manœuvring, be arrested longer than a few moments at each halting-place, until it was finally at rest at the top of the building.

But there were certain (supposed) advantages connected with his improved lift which fully compensated for this rather inconvenient peculiarity, as Mr Beltram had carefully explained to me. I turned to the door which closed the landing, but, to my great surprise, I found that it would not open. I struggled vainly with the lock for a few moments, but it was certainly fastened upon the other side; and it then flashed upon me that, being engrossed in our argument, Beltram must have mistaken the floor, and put me out at a wrong landing—one probably opening on a disused floor of apartments; for the Manor was a roomy, rambling abode, and by far the larger pro-

portion of its rooms were unoccupied. Each of the doors which closed the small landings off the lift had a square of glass in its top panel outside, while in the passage an electric light was fixed.

As I stood in the narrow gangway I was therefore in the enjoyment of light—for a few moments! The sonorous old hall-clock struck twelve, and simultaneously with the last stroke I found myself plunged in total darkness—literally 'a darkness which could be felt'—the light on the other side of the door abruptly going out.

I remembered that this sudden extinction of the lights was one of my friend's many ingenious household contrivances, an apparatus (which could, of course, be disconnected if desired) connecting the clock and the electric arrangements, 'so that the lights are all switched off at midnight, which is quite late enough for any of the servants to be out of their beds,' Beltram had remarked to me; for my host, though a liberal and kindly master in the main, was rather a martinet in his household regulations, and as fidgety an old bachelor as ever existed. This rule of 'lights out' had been explained to me upon my arrival; however, as my apartment was amply supplied with candles, it had mattered little to me—until now. But as I stood in the narrow landing, with an abyss below me on one side, I certainly 'longed for light' as earnestly as did ever Ajax!

The position was anything but a pleasant one. I knew that Beltram must be by this time staring from his observatory on the roof, too engrossed with his telescope to think of aught else, and also, of course, wholly unaware of the mistake which he had made. The servants were all probably in bed by this time, or at least quartered in a far-distant part of the house; so, although I shouted lustily for several minutes, until my throat was sore, I was well aware that there was not the slightest chance of any one hearing me. The landing-door was of good, solid oak, and would have resisted the efforts of half-a-dozen men to force it open. I remembered I had still some matches in my fusc-case; I struck one, and cautiously surveyed my surroundings.

I was standing, safely enough, with several feet to spare between myself and the darkness below; and yet, as I looked across that narrow strip of carpet, ending in a black, blank space beyond, I must confess that my heart began to beat and my head to swim. I was safe—quite safe, of course, as I told myself, and had only to wait patiently until the morning came, when I should be missed and sought for. To wait—it was now just midnight, and the Manor household was not an early-rising one. It would be fully other eight hours before Beltram's valet would bring the hot water to my bedroom, and discover that I was not there. Eight hours to wait on this narrow ledge, where a false step

might—I started at the disagreeable reflection, and in so doing dropped my match-box; it rolled along the landing, and then—but after a moment—I heard it strike the bottom of the well of the lift; and by the delay I knew I must be a very considerable height from the ground. If I too should fall over? I resolutely braced myself against this thought.

‘What a fool I am!’ I said aloud. ‘I am safe—perfectly safe—as long as I keep against this door. It is most disagreeable of course, but there is no danger—*absolutely* none.’

Some minutes went by. I was already tired, having made a long ramble on foot that day with my friend, and found my position, standing against the door, rather fatiguing. I would sit down, I thought, and did so. I am a tall man, over six feet in height; as I thoughtlessly stretched out my legs, one foot slightly slipped over. I was up again in a second, clinging to the door-handle and trembling in every limb. *That position was certainly not to be thought of.* The absolute darkness, which seemed to press upon my eyeballs, the silence, the loneliness, were beginning to tell upon my nerves; and then a horrible thought occurred to me: ‘What if I should become faint, and fall, *too near the edge, as my match-box had done?*’

I am not ashamed to confess that this thought turned me sick with dread. I roused myself, however, and stood again closely against the door; but after a while such absolute weariness overpowered me that I was compelled to sit down, keeping crouched together, and packing my inconveniently long limbs into as small a compass as possible. I took the additional precaution of fastening my wrist by my handkerchief to the handle of the door, and then prepared to wait for the day as best I might.

I resolutely reasoned out the position with myself. The danger was a purely imaginary one, I argued again and again, speaking aloud to have the comfort of hearing some sound amid that awful stillness and darkness. I even tried to whistle a tune, but the echoes gave back so strange and reverberating a sound that I abruptly desisted. So the time crept by—was it *hours* or *days*?—and I began to grow chilled and cramped in my constrained position. But *I dared not stretch my limbs again.* I would not risk such another shock as I had recently received when my foot had slipped over the edge of the landing.

My head now began to grow dizzy, strange whispers seemed to echo in my ears, and faces—mocking, evil faces—appeared to rise out of the dark abyss beyond and grin at me.

There is a gruesome story of Erckmann-Chatrian’s which describes a certain haunted room, whose occupants are irresistibly compelled to commit suicide. As I sat cowering in the darkness, I began to feel a horrible impulse growing upon me to plunge forward—and—I fought against

it steadfastly, but the voices seemed to surge round me louder and louder, and hands seemed to beckon—even to *drag* me forward. I shrieked in my despair—and yet I felt convinced that presently I must yield. Yes, it would be easier to do so. And I took a step forward.

‘Are you better now? I shall never, never forgive myself for being such a fool.’ Such were the words which fell upon my ears as I opened my eyes to find myself lying—not at the bottom of the lift, but in the passage—the centre of an excited group of servants in various stages of dress and undress, while Beltram, with a countenance of the deepest concern, was kneeling by my side, holding brandy to my lips, and alternately begging my pardon and execrating his own folly for the mistake which he had made—a mistake which might certainly have had very tragic consequences for me. But the good fellow was blaming himself so severely that no one could be churlish enough to add to his self-reproaches. It had luckily happened that the expected shower of meteors had proved such a brilliant one that my host had hurried off to my bedroom to call me to share in the spectacle. Not finding me there, nor in any of the living-rooms, the idea that he had put me out at a wrong landing flashed upon his mind; rousing the servants, he had hastily run to all the doors opening upon the lift, and found me—*just in time.*

And, after all, I had been imprisoned for barely a couple of hours, although it had seemed like an eternity; and the danger was always more imaginary than real. But our imaginations can often play strange tricks with our nerves, as I had learnt during that night’s adventure.

TO A MODERN PORTIA.

To-day among a crowd I passed,
And ‘mid the faces gay or sad
I sought for one to make me glad;
And, seeking, gazed on yours at last.

Your eyes, whose glance of pleasure told,
Within me woke a sudden thrill;
And yet I dared not gaze my fill,
Lest you should think me over bold.

But, glancing often as I dare,
Oh! what a lasting joy was mine
To see a face so near divine,
So sweet, and more than passing fair!

For, lo! at once in you I found
The lovely soul for whom I yearned;
And in your slender form discerned
A queen of women, though uncrowned;

A truthful creature, chaste and pure;
A woman one might die to kiss;
Not too reserved for human bias,
Yet strong to suffer and endure.

SAM WOOD.